RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 25th February, 1986
6 Phalguna, 1907 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock. **Mr. Chairman** in the Chair.

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I refer with profound sorrow and grief to the passing away of Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale, a former nominated Member of this House and an artiste of great eminence.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi was born at Madurai in Tamil Nadu in February, 1904. Since her early years she had evinced great interest in theosophy and broke away from the bonds of orthodoxy. A born artiste, Rukmini Devi had learnt ballet from the world renowned Anna Pavlova and later Bharatanatyam under the classical masters. She soon excelled everyone and became not only a great Bharatanatyam artiste herself but also an eminent choregraphar. She received the Sangeet Natak Akademi award for Bharatanatyam in 1957 and Several awards from India and abroad.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi worked for India's cultural renaissance through art, culture and education. To give concrete shape to her ideas, she started several art, dance and educational institutions, notably "Kala Kshetra" at Adyar, which have produced a number of accomplished artists and restored Bharatanatyam to its pristine glory and grace. As a choreographer of excellence, she had directed a number of Dance Dramas in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Bengali. She was also associated with the Vishwa Bharati and Banaras Hindu University.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi was a great lover of animals and introduced in our House a Bill—called the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Bill, 1953. Her efforts culminated in the Parliament enacting a law relating to Prevention of cruelty to Animals in 1960.

Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale was a Member of the Rajya Sabha for ten years, having been nominated to the Rajya Sabha first in 1952 and then re-nominated in 1956. For her accomplishment in the arts, she was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1956.

We deeply mourn the passing away of Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale.

I request Members to rise in their places and observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.

(Hon. Members then stood in silence for one minute.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Secretary-General will convey to the members of the bereaved family our sense of profound sorrow and deep sympathy.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Payment of D.A. to the Central Government employees

*21. SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH:†

SHRIMATI RATAN KUMARI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of D.A. instalments which have become due as on date for payment to the Central Government employees on account of recent rise in prices of almost all the commodities; and

(b) by when these instalments are likely to be released for payment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Bir Bhadra Pratap Singh.

Statement

(a) and (b) Consequent upon the increase of 8 points in the average index level at the end of December, 1985 from 600 points to 608 points, one more instalment of dearness allowance has become due for consideration with effect from 1-1-1986. The impact of recent increase in prices of wheat, rice, petroleum products, coal fertilizers etc. is not yet known.

Payment of each instalment of Dearness Allowance to Central Govt. employees cost the exchequer approximately Rs. 70 crores per annum Therefore, question of payment of each instalment has to be considered carefully with regard to their impact on the economic situation and the Budget. The question of sanction for payment of the D.A. instalment due from 1-1-1986 is receiving the attention of the Government. It is, however, not possible to indicate any time limit for taking a decision in this regard.

SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am quite conscious of the facts given in the reply that one more instalment of dearness allowance has become due for consideration with effect from 1-1-1986 and that each instalment costs Rs. 70 crores to the public exchequer. The questions that I want to ask are two. Firstly, what are the reasons for which full neutralisation of dearness allowance is not granted to several Government employees whereas this is done in the case of bank employees and employees in the other public sector undertakings? Secondly, what are the details of items which are taken into consideration for calculating the average price index level for granting dearness allowance to the Central Government employees and whether after knowing the impact of the recent steep rise in the prices on account of petroleum etc., that will be taken into consideration for deciding the rise in the average price index for granting the dearness allowance?

SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI: Sir, for a general rise of 8 points in the c.p.i., one D.A. instalment is due Sir, so far as the pay structure and the dearness allowance is concerned, the Fourth Pay Commission is looking into that. And we are awaiting the main report of the Fourth Pay Commission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your second supplementary.

SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH: Sir, I know and I am quite conceding the fact that the present quantum of dearness allowance is not enough to neutralise the inflation and the increase in the cost of living index but I am more bothered about the Class III and Class IV employees. May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is contemplating any steps so that these employees could form themselves into small co-operatives and be eligible to some sort of a subsidy etc. ,or that the essential commodities could be provided to them at cheaper rates so that the effect of price rise on them may not [illegible] and the dearness allowance which [illegible]t to them is not neutralised [illegible] further increase in prices.

SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI: Sir, we have already given two interim reliefs to Government employees. As the hon. Member knows in the last year the instalments of dearness allowance were given on 1-1-85, 1-5-85, 1.8.85, 1.11.1985. These have been already paid to the Government employees. So far as the low-paid employees are concerned, we are protecting their interests and so far as this suggestion that has been made by the hon. Member is concerned, there is no such proposal before the Government.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is the supply of essential commodities.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: Sir, may I supplement to what my hon. colleague has already said? The hon. Member has rightly talked about the class III and Class IV employees and about the fixed income groups which sections are most severely affected by any increase in prices and what relief could be given to them May I assure the hon. Member that the Government will be taking a very early decision on the instalment that is due to the employees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Shrimati Ratan Kumari.

श्रीमती रत्न कुमारी : सभापति महोदय, मंहगाई कोई इस राष्ट्र की समस्या नहीं, अपितु अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय समस्या है। फिर भी जिस प्रकार सरकार ने फिस्कल पालिसी को ध्यान में रखते हुए मंहगाई [illegible] किया है, उसके लिये मैं सरकार को धन्यवाद देती हूं।

महंगाई भत्ते का सवाल केन्द्रीय कर्मचारियों के साथ [illegible] प्रादेशिक कर्मचारियों से जुड़ा हुआ है; क्योंकि जब भी केन्द्रीय सरकार अपने कर्मचारियों को महंगाई भत्ता देती है, तब प्रादेशिक सरकारों को भी [illegible] पड़ [illegible]

[illegible] को [illegible] कर्मचारियों [illegible] चारियों को भी कुछ राहत मिल सके।

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: Sir, this relates to the State Government employees. It is the State Governments which will be able to say something.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, you know that the method according to which the dearness allowance is granted to Central Government employees is far from compensating them the actual loss in the real wages suffered by them due to rise in prices because for every 8 point rise on an annual average they are given d. a. and the fact is that when this annual average is reached is known to the Government from its appropriate agency much later and then the Government takes further time to take a decision thereupon and by that time the prices go up further and the employees continue to suffer. As has happened in the recent case also, the Government knows that the Central Government employees have become entitled to get another instalment of d. a. from January but till today the Union Government has not sanctioned its grant. By the time another price rise has taken place because of this administered orders in raising the prices of every essential commodity. So, Central Government employees were demanding the automatic linkage with the price index and the grant of dearness allowance as and when prices rise. But the whole issue, as the Minister of State for Finance has stated, has been referred to the Fourth Pay Commission and the Fourth Pay Commission is sitting tight over its job and neither the Government has been insisting upon the Fourth Pay Commission to submit its report and nor is the Fourth Pay Commission...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two minutes are over.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Sir, my [illegible] is what positive steps and [illegible] steps the Government has taken or propose to take to expedite [illegible] submission of the Central Pay [illegible]'s Report and finalise this formula once for all?

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: It is true that Government employees do not get fully compensated but the hon. Member should not forget the fact that this very Government when it came to industrial workers, had compensated 101 per cent of the salary and raised the D.A. from 1.30 to 1.65. About the CPI, it has taken time and I think we have to improve it and see how it can be expedited and we get early information About linkage, the linkage is there. I think the hon. Member was referring to automatic payment when he said about automatic linkage. We do try it and if you see the record

of the Government of last year, you will find that we have been paying instalments promptly. While responding to Vir Bhadraji I said that we are taking early decision on the D.A. which is due and we have not delayed it. As for the Fourth Pay Commission, Sir, the Pay Commission is an autonomous body. We cannot direct the Pay Commission to do it but we have certainly requested in an informal way and the Pay Commission is also very much concerned about it.

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: When in accordance with the report of the last Pay Commission the Government are already committed to grant increase in dearness allowance with the rise of 8 points in CPI, why it has been mentioned in this reply that the question of payment of each instalment has to be considered carefully with regard to their impact on the economic situation and the Budget? It means that the Government can even waive its commitment; it means that the Government can even decide otherwise. Once the Government is committed, then the Government must evolve such procedures whereby as soon as there is an 8-point increase in CPI, D.A. should be automatically granted but the employees again may take the position that additional D.A. must be granted from that date. This is number one. Secondly, I would like to know, as my other colleague said, whenever there is payment of D. A. to the Central Government employees, it has an impact—a natural impact—on all other employees, the State employees, the public sector employees and local bodies employees. because their D.A. is related to Central D.A. and then complecation arise at various levels of the States because due to meagre resources, they are not able to pay it. So, what is needed is, there should be a national formula of dearness allowance which should satisfy the needs of the salaried classes, the Government employees etc. Will the Government consider the question of evolving a national formula on dearness allowance?

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: The hon. Member mentioned that Government may not honour its commitment. So far as dearness allowance is concerned, I think before raising this sort of suspicion, he should see the record of the Government. We have never defaulted. What the hon. Member referred to was said in the context that sometime D.A. has been impounded and deposited in their fund or paid later on an that was in the context of certain conditions in the economy. and that is in the confidence of the Government employees and I think it is only to that extent that it has been referred to and not that we go back and no pay it. I can assure you that when the D.A. is due, Government will pay it. Of course flexibility is there according to the condition of the economy; sometime it can be paid a little later, that is a different thing. About the State Government employees, many Chief Ministers have said that when we raise the D.A. it has an impact on them and on their resources but we cannot hold back the payment once it becomes due. And on the one hand the hon. Members are saying that we should not hold back the payment and on other they say it has an impact on the State employees. These are the two contradictory positions. About national formula, there is the formula by which Central Government employees are granted D.A. About linkage with the State Government employees etc., I will not be in a position to say anything without knowing the views of the State Governments.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Is the hon. Minister aware that every year we are depriving the State Government employees of an amount of about Rs. 300 crores by linking—what he called there is automatic linkage—to the average of 8-point rise in the course of a year? As far as the question of automatic linkage is concerned, which Mr. Dipen Ghosh also raised I believe, it should be linked not to the average of a year, but as soon as the cost of living index rises, it

should be related to that. Therefore on the question of automatic linkage also there is deficiency part from the delay in making payment. The Pay Commission has recommended that for every 8 point rise, those who are getting a basic pay of less than Rs. 300, later on modified to Rs. 400, would also be neutralised to the extent of 4 per cent. This formula itself affects those who are getting a basic pay of less than Rs. 400. Now, we are so much concerned over bringing people above poverty line that...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two minutes over. Put your question.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: ... we are forgetting the thirty year old concept of a living wage. Secondly, in the case of those who are getting a basic pay of more than Rs. 400, the neutralisation in the case of Government employees is 3 per cent against the rise of 4 per cent. The question is, should the Government wait for the Pay Commission when justice is as simple as this, to modify the earlier decision and in any case recommend to the Pay Commission that this should be the principle adopted in regard to payment of dearness allowance?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the Minister will reply.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: The hon. Member is now suggesting a change in the formula itself. I think, the Pay Commission would take care of this. We are implementing the existing formula. May I remind the hon. Member that the Third Pay Commission recommended automatic D.A. up to CPI 272 points which had been reached a long time back? Beyond that, the Government is still paying DA on the basis of the same formula. This shows that Government has taken care of the employees' difficulties and it has not stuck only to the recommendation of the Pay Commission.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: You are not giving a full answer in the sense that the Third Pay Commission's recommendation was to pay dearness allowance up to 272 points, but there was also another part of the Pay Commission's recommendation that if the consumr price index goes beyond 272 points, it will justify the revision of the pay scales as such. This you have not done yet.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: I think, the Pay Commission is taking care of it.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: The 272 points had been reached long back. By paying dearness allowance beyond that, you are depriving the employees.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The point which the hon. Member makes is that the Pay Commission recommended neutralisation up to 272 and thereafter the Pay Commission thought of re-revision of wages and not merely giving of DA. What is your answer to this?

SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI: The recommendation of the Third Pay Commission was that DA should be paid up to 272 points and afterwards the pay structure should be reviewed. But the point here is, the Government is taking care of the employees by giving additional DA.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: At what rate? The earlier rate.

SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI: We cannot say that Government did not take care of its employees. That is why, beyond 272 points, additional DA has been paid. Now, the Fourth Pay Commission is looking into all these aspects. Let us wait for the recommendations of the Fourth Pay Commission.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Up to when?

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: I think, the Fourth Pay Commission is taking care of all your questions.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: I would like to know, while fixing DA whether the Government is taking into account the wholesale price index or any other item like house rent allowance increase and also the factor...

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member does not know the subject. Mr. Chitta Basu.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government have precisely made the calculation of the quantum of rise in the cost of living index and consumer price index before the recent price hike was announced? Secondly, may I know from the hon. Minister, when he is so much fond of long-term policy statements, whether the Government have any intention of evolving a long-term prices and wages policy in view of the spurt in prices off and on causing tremendous miseries to the working class and the salaried employees?

SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI: So far as CPI is concerned, we are depending upon the recommendations of the Labour Bureau of Simla. So far as the policy is concerned, this is a Question Hour and I am not in a position to declare policy matters here.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Whether the Government has got the intention.

I am not asking about policy matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In Question Hour, you cannot ask question of policy. The Minister is right in his answer.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Have I got the right to know the intention of the Government or not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not in the question time, please. Yes. Dr. Shanti Patel.

DR. SHANTI G. PATEL: The Government employees are not being paid even now according to the norms laid down by the 25th Indian Labour Conference, of which Government representatives are a part. In this background, the dearness allowance which is being paid does not fully neutralise the rise. As far as the Bureau of Labour statistics are concerned it is well known that the computation is faulty and this was stated in so many terms by the Committee appointed by the Government of India and headed by Prof. Rath. I would, therefore, like to know from the hon. Finance Minister as to whether he would not like to revise the present rate of compensation from Rs. 1.65 per point to Rs. 2.50, as demanded by the labour from time to time without waiting for the report of the Pay Commission because this is not something which refers to the Pay Commission.

SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI: Sir, as I have stated, there is no such proposal to revise. Now we are waiting for the report of the Fourth Pay Commission. About the pay structure, dearness allowance—all these things are being looked into by the Fourth Pay Commission. Let us wait for its report and we are expecting them to submit the report in the middle of the calendar year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question. Question No. 22.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: He is asking a question about cost of living indices.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: The Minister is not giving correct answer. The question is regarding revision of indices. He is pleading his ignorance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have made your point. Question No. 22.

Export of drugs to Afghanistan

*22. SHRI DINKARRAO GOVINDRAO PATIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether drugs are being exported to Afghanistan; and

(b) if so, the details of the exports made during the last three years, yearwise?